

The new [Evaluation Policy](#), [corporate evaluation strategy](#) and [Work Plan approved by the High Commissioner](#) signal the relevance and importance of strengthening evaluations in UNHCR. Evaluations do require time and effort from the organization, and serve a unique purpose in our accountability and learning systems. We have prepared this reference so that Bureau and Division Directors and Representatives (and their delegates) can ensure that evaluations are as useful as possible and are managed smoothly at HQ and in the field. For any questions, please contact hqevaserv@unhcr.org.



Evaluations in UNHCR in a nutshell:

All evaluations in UNHCR:

- Are a partnership between the Evaluation Service (ES) and the concerned Bureau, Office and/or Division, who play a critical role for a successful evaluation process.
- Are scoped and defined jointly between ES and concerned Bureaux, Divisions and country offices, and can be **fully or partly funded by ES**.
- Need to be carried out by external consultants. UNHCR Staff with specific thematic and operational expertise may join an evaluation team in an advisory capacity.
- Require technical advice and [Quality Assurance](#) from ES through all phases and are published [online](#).
- Can be classified in two broad categories:
 - **Centralised evaluations**: commissioned, funded and **managed** by the Evaluation Service (ES). SET members will be requested to oversee the management response to the evaluation.
 - **Decentralised evaluations**: proposed and initiated by Offices, Bureaux and Divisions; **co-managed** with ES; can be undertaken jointly with partners. Concerned Representative/Bureau/Division Directors will prepare management responses.
- Evaluation is distinct from other complementary functions related to oversight and monitoring. Evaluation is used to explain the reasons behind performance, impact and results of our efforts and makes use of data and information that is triangulated across many sources to do so.

FAQ

How are evaluation topics selected?

- ES facilitates an **annual process of consultation** (between October and December) with HQ and field-based colleagues to develop an annual work-plan. Whereas topics for Centralised Evaluations are set at the beginning of each year, suggestions for Decentralised Evaluation topics (put forward by Bureaux, Operations or Divisions) can be shared with ES throughout the year.
- The consultation in 2017 involved an online survey with over 150 colleagues including HQ Senior Management, Representatives, their Deputies and Assistants, as well as a random sample of colleagues. Survey results were narrowed through further discussions with each Bureau and Division and the SMC. Finally, the Head of ES submitted the proposed work plan for SET and HC approval.

FAQ

When are evaluation most useful?

Consider initiating an evaluation if you see an opportunity to:

- **Inform strategy**, programme adjustments and changes – to make changes to an ongoing intervention, re-focus a strategy or approach to improve results.
- **Boost legitimacy among** internal and external stakeholders – Evaluation results can be used to **contribute to advocacy and visibility** based on a compelling independent analysis.
- **Support individual/team learning** – engagement in the evaluation process itself can foster reflection and learning and contribute to changes in awareness.



An evaluation may not be the most appropriate choice when:

- Management requires rapid internal feedback to course correct ongoing interventions OR rapid and informal exercises with less extensive data collection and triangulation may be sufficient to generate the information and analysis required.
- The need for independence and impartiality is not an essential requirement and there is sufficient existing quality data that can be collated and analysed internally.
- There is a need to examine issues related to fraud, mismanagement, misconduct or individual performance. This would be under the purview of the IGO or DHRM.

How Senior Managers and the Evaluation Service can partner for more useful and timely evaluations

Evaluation phases and indicative duration	What you can expect from the Evaluation Service	What Bureau Directors/Deputy Directors and Representatives should do when initiating or receiving an evaluation
<p>ANNUAL WORKPLANNING for EVALUATION</p>	<p><u>For Centralised evaluations ES will:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Draft the Work Plan through a consultative process involving offices, Bureaux and Divisions. [Once per year between October and December] <p><u>For Decentralised evaluations ES will:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Keep an eye throughout the year for a need for evaluations. → Co-manage and consider co-funding the evaluations with the concerned Office. 	<p><u>Senior management should:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Provide inputs to ES on possible evaluation topics during consultation on the development of the corporate Evaluation Work Plan both for Centralised (or strategic) evaluations and Decentralised (or operations specific evaluations). → As needed, any time throughout the year, approach ES who can help address unforeseen evaluation needs and requirements.
<p>Phase 1: SCOPING INDIVIDUAL EVALUATIONS and agree on a Terms of Reference <i>[min. 1-2 months]</i></p>	<p><u>For Centralised evaluations ES will:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Draft the evaluation ToRs, gather comments from the focal points at field or Bureau/Division level; finalise and advertise the ToR → Manage the selection and contracting of the evaluation team (convening an interview panel involving the evaluation focal point). → Clarify roles and responsibilities of the evaluation focal points in the Bureau, Offices, and Divisions – particularly in relation to retrieving and compiling data and information to be shared with the evaluators, and facilitate the field visits. → Ensure concerned senior management is copied in relevant updates at key stages of the evaluation. <p><u>For Decentralised evaluations ES will:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Review and support development of ToR or concept note prepared by the concerned Operation or Office. → Help advertise the ToR and select the evaluation team. → Provide quality assurance to all interim and final deliverables. → Discuss any need to co-fund and co-manage the evaluation. 	<p><u>Senior management should:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Ensure that all relevant colleagues at Headquarters and in the field receive the “evaluation kick-off message” that the Head of ES sends to formally initiate the evaluation. → Nominate and task an evaluation focal point who will work with the evaluation manager in ES to scope the evaluation with stakeholder input and compile relevant documents, data and information as well as key contracts for the evaluation. → Review and agree on the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluation ToRs - Overall timeline of the evaluation including the evaluation field missions. - Proposed composition of the evaluation advisory group (which may include UNHCR internal and external members) if one is established.
<p>Phase 2: EVALUATION INCEPTION PHASE used to agree on the approach and methodology to be used by evaluation team <i>[typically 2-4 weeks, may include inception visits]</i></p>	<p><u>For both centralised and decentralised evaluations ES and the Evaluation Team will:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Communicate with sufficient notice the main evaluation requirements including those relating to documents, data and interviews for stakeholders. → Share with the evaluation focal point the informed consent and confidentiality protocols to be used during the evaluation. → Coordinate the comments on the draft inception report with evaluation focal points in the concerned Office and Operation. 	<p><u>Senior management should:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Ensure (through the evaluation focal point as appropriate) unimpeded access to documents, emails, reports, and other information. → Make her/himself available for telephone or in-person interview with the evaluation team (as required).

<p>Phase 3: EVALUATION DATA COLLECTION PHASE (e.g. through surveys, interviews and other tools) <i>[approx. 2-4 weeks in the field +1 week for follow up]</i></p>	<p><u>For both centralised and decentralised evaluations ES and the Evaluation Team will:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Ensure the integrity of the evaluation process which includes minimizing possible bias and undue influence during the field-level data collection activities and interviews, as well as be aware of possible conflict of interest. → Alert Bureau Directors and other concerned senior managers as appropriate (through the Head of ES) of any sensitive issues should they emerge during the evaluation mission. → Ensure the concerned Representatives and Directors are briefed at the conclusion of the evaluation mission. 	<p><u>Senior management should:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Ensure that the evaluation focal point can free up the minimum time required to support the preparation for the evaluation mission, facilitate logistics of the evaluation field visits, and help consolidating comments on the draft report. → Ensure unimpeded access to relevant secondary data and communicate the importance of, and give support to the outreach to set up meetings with stakeholders (including donor as needed) and refugees. → Make her/himself available for initial interview and debriefing with the evaluation team.
<p>EVALUATION ANALYSIS and REPORTING PHASE <i>[min. 2-4 weeks]</i></p>	<p><u>For both centralised and decentralised evaluations ES and the Evaluation Team will:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Organise and co-facilitate with the evaluation team (as needed) a stakeholder validation workshop to discuss and refine the proposed recommendations to ensure greater ownership, relevance and feasibility. → Provide Evaluation Quality Assurance (EQA) to the draft and final report – including reviewing the strength of logic and evidence used to support the findings, and ensure that the final report meets minimum quality standards. → Coordinate all comments from stakeholders on draft reports, and ensure that these are presented and incorporated as appropriate in the final report. 	<p><u>Senior management is expected to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Ensure that all stakeholders provide detailed feedback as required on the key evaluation findings or ensure that the evaluation focal point can convey them as appropriate.
<p>FINAL SUBMISSION for MANAGEMENT RESPONSE and dissemination</p>	<p><u>For both centralised and decentralised evaluations the Evaluation Service and the Evaluation Team will:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Ensure the timely submission of the evaluation for management response. → Ensure timely answers to questions from senior management as they prepare their response but does not otherwise engage in the response process. → Ensure the report is uploaded with the Management Response on the UNHCR dedicated evaluation page and further disseminated as required. 	<p><u>Senior management is expected to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Provide final review and approval on the evaluation report in consultation with the Head of ES for Decentralised Evaluations. For Centralised Evaluations, concerned SET members will also review the report prior to finalisation. → For all evaluations, provide input to the management response to (1) indicate which recommendations they accept / partially accept / reject and why, and (2) outline any concrete follow up action they agree and commit to take.